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Abstract

The social, academic, and perscnal experiences of students is the basic area explored in this study. Data was obtained from interviews and questionnaires of students and school personnel. James Coleman's work on the adolescent society and other research data was also used. Data was obtained on the influence the acticns of teachers, administrators, librarians, and counselors have on students. The evidence collected suggests that teacher personality and the interaction between pupil and teacher are of majcr significance in school functioning. In addition tc exposure to organized knowledge, there are apparently many important experiences for pupils at school. It is not the materials, facilities, teachers, and peers, but rather their worth to the student that is important, as well as the student's worth or value to teachers and peers. Based on the abcve research, a theory cf Preliminary Curriculum Assessments was developed. Two assumptions are made: (1) education is what pupils perceive is happening to them because they attend school, and (2) education is what teachers (school perscnnel) dc that influences pupils. [Not available in hard copy due to marginal legibility of original dccument]. (Author/KJ).

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# THE SOCIAL-ACADEMIC-PERSONAL EXPERIENCES OF PUPILS: THE ADOLESCENT SOCIETY REVISITED

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## PURPOSES

James S. Coleman in his book The Adolescent Society, was motivated by two concerns: one, to study status and its sources and, two, to improve the functioning of high schools. The content of his report suggests an assumption that student perceptions are major components in adolescent status and school functioning, therefore, students were the major source of his data.

To develop a method of Preliminary Curriculum Assessments, the authors of this paper were faced more directly with improving the functioning of secondary schools and broadening their sources of data, assuming that equal time and care should be devoted to obtaining the observations and judgments of a school's professional personnel. We agree that it is important to determine what pupils judge is happening to them because they attend school, and students are the source of about half of our data. In addition to Coleman's work, we drew on other research designed to collect data to improve the functioning of schools, research exemplified by Ryans, Hughes, Travers, and others. These persons obtain data on the actions of teachers, administrators, librarians, and counselors as these actions influence students. The evidence collected from this approach suggests that teacher personality and the interaction between pupil and teacher are of major significance in school functioning.

In addition to exposure to organized knowledge, there are apparently many important experiences for pupils at school. A pupil learns to seek or avoid intellectual activities on the basis of whether he finds them rewarding and challenging, or obscure and irrelevant. It is not the presence or absence of books, gymnasiums, courses, or activities but an individual pupil's personal experiences with them that is important. Teachers and other adults are present--what experiences does he have with them? Other pupils are present--

what experiences does he have with them? A pupil partially decides his own worth on the basis of the value teachers and other pupils extend to him. These experiences combine to provide the school's institutional impact.

Based on the above research and assumptions, theory, procedures, and instruments to assess several aspects of instruction and learning were developed to make Preliminary Curriculum Assessments. The theory makes two basic assumptions. One assumption is: education is what pupils perceive is happening to them because they attend school. This includes experiences in classrooms, offices, hallways and at-school activities. The second assumption is: education is what teachers (school personnel) do that influences pupils. This includes the planning that is done, the materials and activities that are used, and the pupil behaviors that are rewarded and punished.

## METHODS

Coleman's main source of data was questionnaires to students on two different occasions. These data were supplemented with informal student interviews, a study of school records, and questionnaires completed by teachers and parents.

To secure the data for the Preliminary Curriculum Assessments (P.C.A.), interviews and questionnaires were used with pupils and each school's professional personnel: teachers, principals, librarians, and counselors. Because interviews force the respondent to construct his own response and allow the interviewer to pursue a reply when he judged it fruitful, precision and thoroughness are possible. Interviews are time consuming, so only a sample of pupils and professional personnel can be interviewed. With questionnaires the respondent must choose among the answers presented, but all members of the population can be included and large numbers of responses

can be tabulated and combined. Interviews provide depth, questionnaires provide breadth, and when they contain parallel items, they collect data that is supportive or contradictory to each other. Interviews and questionnaires utilize the observations of persons accepted as part of the usual population and minimize the influence of the data collector on the situation being observed.

## POPULATION

Coleman's population for The Adolescent Society consisted of five small schools in Northern Illinois, enrollments between 150 and 500, and five large schools in the same geographic area, enrolling between 750 and 1850 students. The Preliminary Curriculum Assessment population consisted of schools in East Central Indiana, seven were small schools and nine were large schools.

Table 1 - THE SCHOOLS, TOGETHER WITH SIZES OF STUDENT BODIES

| | COLEMAN'S ADOLESCENT SOCIETY | PRELIMINARY CURRICULUM ASSESSMENT |
|---|---|---|
| Schools of less than 500 | 5 | 7 |
| Over 500, less than 1000 | 1 | 5 |
| Over 1000, less than 1500 | 2 | 2 |
| Over 1500 | 2 | 2 |
| Number of Schools Studied | 10 | 16 |
| Number of Pupils in Schools Studied | 10,451 | 12,656 |

The actual data as used for the Preliminary Curriculum Assessment came from 12,122 Secondary Student questionnaires, 628 Secondary teacher questionnaires, 661 Student interviews and 273 Teacher, Administrative and School Personnel Interviews.

Coleman's data were collected in the 1957-58 school year and our data during the school years from 1965-68; there is a ten year period between the two sets of dates. The concepts contained in many of the items in Co s questionnaire, were modified in our questionnaires and interview g But these were supplemented by research done by others. The items and results of Flannigan's Project Talent were studied carefully and several concepts here were also utilized. Major concepts in other theories of instruction and principles of learning served as bases for questionnaire and interview items. In addition the Preliminary Curriculum Assessment made an assumption that one strong influence in determining school impact, was the teacher behavior and the studies of teacher behavior were carefully surveyed and items were built on concepts gleaned from this research. One of the more productive studies which was utilized was Ryan's Characteristics of Teachers.

## SCHOOL EXPERIENCES OF PUPILS

Interview data indicated that both students and teachers agreed that the major instructional method is the lecture-discussion combination. Teachers and pupils further agree that there was little attempt to teach and learn that which was useful outside of school. Students were rarely able to give concrete illustrations of where what they had been doing in their classrooms was directly applicable outside of class or might someday be directly applicable. Despite the program pupils claimed to be following, most are enrolled in the same classes, use the same textbooks as all other students, have about the same assignments, complete the same examinations, and in general have little focusing due to the program or the levels of attainment or achievement. As Coleman found, athletics and athletic related activities were the predominant activities. This was even more true

in small schools. Since most schools run an athletic program which can serve only a limited number of people as direct participants, many students were eliminated through competition from participating. And like Coleman's students these also spent their out-of-school time watching television, messing around, driving around, and doing homework.

Table 2 - TIME SPENT ON HOMEWORK OUTSIDE OF CLASS EACH DAY

| | |
|---|---|
| None at all | 7% |
| On the average, less than one-half hour | 26% |
| About one hour | 35% |
| Between one and two hours | 26% |
| More than two hours | 6% |

Number of Cases 12,122

Data on the out-of-school activities of pupils (Table 2) indicate that thirty-five percent of the pupils spent about one hour a day outside of class on homework, thirty-three percent indicated that they spent on the average less than one-half hour, seven percent indicated that they did no homework at all, however, twenty-six percent indicated that they spent between one and two hours a day on homework. Only six percent indicated they spent more than two hours a day on homework. Further study of the out-of-school activities of students indicated that thirty-one percent of the of the students surveyed (Table 3) did not claim to work outside of school for pay, twenty-five percent indicated, however, that they worked sixteen or more hours a week.

Table 3 - WORK ACTIVITIES OF PUPILS: HOURS A WEEK OF WORK FOR PAY

| | |
|---|---|
| None | 31% |
| About 1 to 5 hours | 21% |
| About 6 to 10 hours | 14% |
| About 11 to 15 hours | 9% |
| About 16 or more | 25% |
| Number of cases | 11,522 |

About two-thirds of the students gave an unqualified "yes" when asked if they enjoyed reading. And approximately one-third could name a specific book or magazine that they were currently reading. It varied from school to school but public libraries were found to be as helpful to students as were school libraries, partially due to the difference in hours which they were available. If pupils were reading outside their textbook in connection with a course, it was almost eight chances out of ten that they were doing this because the English teacher required the reading. All of the other subjects combined required the remaining twenty percent of the reading and it appeared that students often might be enrolled in social studies without ever being required to read beyond the text material. Approximately a third of the students said that they seldom or never read anything voluntarily.

## TELEVISION

It was typical to find students who spent two hours a day watching television and their viewing frequently totaled twenty-five hours a week, being somewhat heavier on weekends. But we seldom found pupils who spent that much time reading. If time spent is the criterion, certainly the literature of this generation is television and movies.

Most teachers saw television as significant in the education of youth but still had made little change in their instructional practices because of commercial television. There was no use of educational television in any of the schools in the study.

Schools spend much time attempting to help students learn to read well and almost no time developing pupils' skill and appreciation in viewing television. Some science teachers, and an occasional social studies teacher or English teacher suggested that students watch particular television shows, but rarely was viewing a significant part of the instructional program. In interviews, teachers when questioned speculated that perhaps it was the school's responsibility to develop taste and appreciation in this media but reflected on the topic as if it were an idea they had given little previous thought.

## PUPIL RELATIONSHIPS

Over half the students indicated that they were anxious for school to start and only five percent indicated they would quit school if they could. Of all the things that they do at school, one-third are proud of their grades and at the other end almost one-in-five was not proud of anything that they did in school.

When comparing the work of Coleman's Adolescent Society with data from the Preliminary Curriculum Assessment, it was found that a substantially smaller percent of students in the Curriculum Assessment indicated that they wished to be remembered as "brilliant students". However the (PCA) allowed students the option of selecting a classification of "ordinary student". This classification accounted (Table 4) for thirty-one percent of the total 11,422 cases. When students were allowed a new leadership note the largest fraction preferred to be remembered as an "ordinary student". The most

prevalent classification according to Coleman was for boys being athletic stars and for girls being leaders in activities.

Table 4 - HOW PUPILS WANT TO BE REMEMBERED IN SCHOOL

| COLEMAN'S ADOLESCENT SOCIETY | BOYS | GIRLS |
|---|---|---|
| Brilliant Student | 31% | 29% |
| Athletic Star (boys) | 44% | |
| Leader in Activities (girls) | | 36% |
| Most Popular | 25% | 35% |
| Number of Cases | 3696 | 3955 |

| PRELIMINARY CURRICULUM ASSESSMENT | BOYS & GIRLS |
|---|---|
| Brilliant Student | 21% |
| Athletic Star | 21% |
| Most Popular | 15% |
| Leader in Activities | 12% |
| Ordinary Students | 31% |
| Number of Cases | 11,422 |

Although the (PCA) did not divide the data by boys and girls the classification of being a leader in activities amounted to only twelve percent of the total population in the (PCA) while it amounted to thirty-six percent in the Adolescent Society.

There is some evidence to indicate that the desire to be remembered as a brilliant student might have declined in recent years while the emphasis on being remembered as an ordinary student has increased.

The (PCA) returned data on what pupils wanted to be thought of in their class (Table 5). An overwhelming majority of pupils indicate that they want to be the student who gets the best grades (sixty-one percent). Slightly less than ten percent saw themselves as wanting to be the students with the

best clothes in their class, sixteen percent indicated that they would prefer being thought of as the best in sports.

Table 5 - WHAT PUPILS WANT MOST TO BE IN THEIR SCHOOL CLASSES

| | |
|---|---|
| Ones with the best grades | 51% |
| Ones chosen first in sports | 15% |
| Ones with the nicest clothes | 9% |
| Ones who read the most books | 6% |
| Ones who best help the teacher | 3% |
| Number of Cases | 10,154 |

Table 6 compliments this data when thirty-seven percent of the students indicated that they gained most of their pride in the classroom by making "good grades" on their report cards. This was followed in frequency by twenty-four percent who preferred "liked by all students". Twenty-one percent indicated that being neat and prompt in their work was that which gave them the most pride.

Table 6 - BASE OF PUPIL PRIDE

| | |
|---|---|
| Being neat and prompt in school work | 21% |
| Being helpful to the teacher in the classroom | 7% |
| Getting good grades on report cards | 37% |
| Being well liked by all students | 24% |
| Loss of pride in school | 11% |
| Number of Cases | 10,154 |

When asked if they had a serious question to discuss with someone, approximately half indicated that they would talk with their parents and another third would choose peers to discuss serious questions. Teachers were very much in the minority but would be consulted. Certain individuals on the staff would be consulted especially if the question dealt with school or with college.

Approximately two-thirds could recall a situation in which a teacher had complimented them, (Table 7), and usually it was for some academic achievement--most frequently for attaining a good grade. Better than a fourth did not recall a teacher compliment.

Table 7 - FREQUENCY OF TEACHER COMPLIMENTS CONCERNING PUPILS SCHOOLWORK

| | |
|---|---|
| Almost every day | 5% |
| About once a week | 23% |
| About once a semester | 28% |
| Could not remember a teacher compliment | 25% |
| Teachers give grades rather than compliments | 14% |
| Number of Cases | 12,122 |

Almost all pupils thought it was possible to disagree with teachers although some indicated that there was a certain risk involved and some agreed that this was limited to some teachers. Over half thought that they always or usually were able to please their teachers.

In terms of teacher, parent, and peer group approvals (Table 8), the Adolescent Society indicated that fifty-four percent of the boys and fifty percent of the girls were fearful of parent disapproval. Only four percent of the pupils in the Coleman study worked to avoid teacher disapproval. Forty-three percent of the cases worked to avoid breaking with friends. When

the data from the (PCA) was studied fifty-three percent indicated that they were not particularly concerned with approval of the parents, teachers, or peers. However twenty-four percent responded that they were concerned about being accepted by other students. Fourteen percent of the pupils selected pleasing their parents among the alternatives.

Table 8 - PARENT, TEACHER AND PEER APPROVAL

| COLEMAN'S ADOLESCENT SOCIETY | BOYS | GIRLS |
|---|---|---|
| Parents' disapproval, hardest | 54% | 53% |
| Teachers' disapproval, hardest | 4% | 3% |
| Breaking with a friend, hardest | 43% | 43% |
| Number of Cases 7,515 | | |
| PRELIMINARY CURRICULUM ASSESSMENT | | |
| Things pupils consider most important | | |
| Pleasing parents | 14% | |
| Learning as much as possible in school | 53% | |
| Groups and activities associated outside the school | 3% | |
| Groups and activities associated with the school | 6% | |
| Being accepted and liked by other students | 24% | |
| Number of Cases 10,754 | | |
| How pupils see themselves getting along with teachers | | |
| I almost always please my teachers | 13% | |
| I usually succeed in pleasing them | 60% | |
| I sometimes have trouble pleasing them | 17% | |
| I never seem to be able to please them | 3% | |
| I am not interested in pleasing them | 7% | |
| Number of Cases 10,754 | | |

In further studying how pupils see themselves getting along with teachers the data in Table 8 indicates that sixty percent of the pupils on the (PCA) felt that they usually succeeded in pleasing their teachers, seventeen percent indicated they sometimes have trouble pleasing teachers, thirteen percent indicated that they felt they were always successful in pleasing teachers, ten percent said they never seem to please teachers or were not interested in pleasing teachers.

When student relationship with principal is studied, the interviews and questionnaires overwhelmingly indicate that most students seldom talk to a principal and when they do it is almost entirely for some rule or regulation interpretation.

When students were asked to identify their patterns of behavior when their principal visits their classroom it was found that seventy-two percent of the students claimed they went on working just as they had before (Table 9). However, it was noted that twelve percent indicated their principal never visits their classroom and twelve percent also indicated that they worked harder when the principal visits their classroom.

Table 9 - PUPIL REACTIONS TO PRINCIPALS' CLASSROOM VISITATION

| | |
|---|---|
| Pupils who claim to work harder | 12% |
| Pupils who claim to show him their work | 4% |
| Pupils who claim that they go on just as if he were not there | 72% |
| Pupils who claim the principal never comes into the classroom | 12% |
| Number of Cases | 11,522 |

When pupils were asked what they liked most about school, forty-one percent indicated that they preferred the extra curricular activities, (Table 10). Nearly thirty percent said the other students. Only

thirteen percent said that teachers were what they liked most about school, eight percent said the classroom activities, eight percent indicated building, equipment, books, and grounds. It is further noted also from Table 10 that seventy percent of the pupils responding to this question indicated a response having to do with the social activities, with extra-curricular activities or the social exchange with students as being most liked about school. This would support Coleman's generalizations about the social relevance or the social significance of secondary education.

Table 10 - PUPILS MOST LIKE ABOUT THEIR SCHOOL

| | |
|---|---|
| Extra-curricular activities | 41% |
| Other students | 29% |
| Teachers | 13% |
| Classroom activities | 8% |
| Building, equipment, books, grounds | 8% |
| Number of Cases | 12,122 |

Almost half of the students thought that their parents had never talked to a secondary teacher. When they had talked the times were about equally divided between situations in which parents had received or sought compliments about children and the other half in which the pupils viewed the parent-teacher exchange as derogatory.

Most students did not see school counselors as persons they would seek out except in situations where they wanted to get their schedules changed or in some cases where they wanted information about colleges.

Table 11 presents Coleman's data and that of (PCA). Out of Coleman's 4,020 cases when pupils were questioned reagarding staying in the community, twenty-four per cent of the boys would change jobs if they had an opportunity to go to another town the same size, and twenty-nine percent of the boys

preferred to go to a larger town. Of the girls, thirty-eight percent said they would take a job in a town of like size, and forty-six percent indicated that they would take a job if offered in a larger city. The (PCA) asked the students to appraise their intent of staying in the county in which they currently resided. Nearly thirty percent of them would probably not stay in the county and six percent would definitely not stay. Thus about thirty-five percent intended to leave the community, twenty-eight percent were unsure about their future residence. Ten percent indicated that they would definitely stay, and twenty-seven percent indicated that they probably would stay in the community.

Table 11 - PUPILS INTENT ON STAYING IN THE COMMUNITY

| COLEMAN'S ADOLESCENT SOCIETY | BOYS | GIRLS |
|---|---|---|
| When compared to same size town (other) | 24% | 38% |
| When compared to larger city (other) | 29% | 46% |
| Number of Cases 4,020 | | |

| PRELIMINARY CURRICULUM ASSESSMENT | BOYS & GIRLS |
|---|---|
| Probably live in this county when out of school | |
| Definitely yes | 10% |
| Probably yes | 27% |
| Don't know | 28% |
| Probably no | 29% |
| Definitely no | 6% |
| Number of Cases 10,751 | |

## TEACHER PERCEPTIONS

Teachers judged that professional reading, usually from journals of the NEA or the state teachers association, conversations with other teachers, and attending college classes were the major sources of ideas for improvement of their teaching. Almost half indicated that they were doing something differently this year. Usually these were modifications of former practices, and most classified their new activities as trying to do better what they had always done. The teachers seemed uniformly open to new ideas, expressed serious concern for improving instruction, and indicated that they would welcome help in improving their teaching.

Teachers generally viewed the principal as a person who supplied support for teachers' ideas, provided support for teachers in discipline, and as one who handled materials and equipment. There was little mention of the principal as a person who stimulated curriculum development or one who evaluated teacher performance.

Most teachers saw pupils' achievement as the major source of their satisfaction and this usually meant academic achievement, either the current kind in which a student's face and manner brighten or the long-range kind in which, hopefully, some students return years later to thank the teacher for his help.

Tests, teacher-made and commercial, are the major factors in pupil evaluation but teachers were dissatisfied with this and yet found no satisfactory alternative. Most teachers verbalized a concern for more individualization of instruction but felt frustrated in this task. They agreed that better students and the poorer ones should be treated differently, but in practice they often supplied just more or less of the same experiences provided for other students.

Teachers were divided in determining when a pupil should be assigned a failing grade. Approximately half judged that the student should meet standards established by the teacher and the other half were willing to give passing grades to students who displayed an appropriate amount of effort.

The teachers seemed to be quite satisfied with teaching as the best alternative in choosing a profession as over ninety percent, were they starting over, would enter teaching.

The areas of instruction judged by teachers and administrators to be strongest were those which enrolled bright pupils or those in which the effects produced by drill, rote, and memory are most widely accepted as good qualities. These include the areas specifically of math and science. Other areas of strength were those in which activity is a dominant part of instruction such as in business education, band, and physical education. There was a wide range of formality in classrooms but teacher-centered, teacher-talking classrooms are the dominant pattern. Textbooks are the major determinant of content and sequence in instruction. There was limited articulation and much isolation of the formal instruction from classroom to classroom, from grade level to grade level, and from teacher to teacher, although pupils did not report this as objectionable. Joint planning among teachers for instruction was very rarely practiced. Over half of the teachers claimed that pupils participate in planning of instruction but pupils were uniform in their failure to support this claim.

## PRINCIPAL'S PERCEPTIONS

Almost every principal interviewed said that the outstanding characteristics of his teaching staff were cooperation and good preparation. All saw that their school curricula was much more suitable for college bound

than for terminal students. But in almost no school were the majority of students continuing their education beyond high school. Almost all of them agreed that the vocational programs and programs for non-successful students were inadequate and few were working on a constructive program to change the situation. Teachers and principals alike agreed that they got their new ideas from talking with other teachers or principals, thus it seemed a rather closed circle which exchanged existing ideas. Most claimed to be reading one or two professional periodicals; these were predominantly the NEA Journal and the NASSP Bulletin. Almost without exception the principals felt that there existed no satisfactory way of measuring the principal's success.

## LIBRARY

The libraries in these schools were almost entirely dominated by the librarian and there seemed to be little resistance to this domination from teachers, pupils, or administrators. Librarians largely selected the books and instructional materials and established procedures for the use of them. Most schools had no systematic or formal arrangement whereby teachers kept librarians informed, ahead of time, of the topics to be studied or the preparation of materials appropriate to a particular instructional assignment.

In almost every library students were used extensively as student librarians. Most schools had formal instruction in the use of the library. In situations where there was some combination of study hall and library, the incidence of student browsing among magazines and books was greatly increased.

None of the schools had established a formal procedure for the handling of objections to materials in the library. Incidence of objection seemed to be extremely rare as the librarians themselves were quite sensitive to possible charges of obscene material and carefully provided their own censorship.

## PRELIMINARY CURRICULUM ASSESSMENT AS A BASIS FOR CURRICULUM DEVELOPMENT

Approaches to curriculum improvement should be based on research, unified by a theory, accommodate principles of learning, and be congruent with the world in which the pupils will live. An attempt has been made to meet these conditions with the Preliminary Curriculum Assessment. We advocate that the Assessment be used by a district; that the data be studied by professional personnel, pupils, and laymen; and that projects be initiated to systematically utilize the information in planning and conducting alternatives to present practices.

Several districts have utilized this approach. Subsequent meetings have been held with faculty groups, administrators, and board members. Faculty groups have published detailed responses, and have revised method and content based on their experiences. In two or three situations reaction has been openly hostile, and the data and those who collected it have been rejected. Data taken from reports have been used in legal school hearings, both for and against practices and districts. In some cases, individual teachers have revised their basic assumptions on education, and have made major modifications in their instruction. The reaction has been varied, and we continue to modify the content based on what we learn and on other research as it becomes available. For example, several of the concepts in Coleman's Equality of Educational Opportunity were used in our latest versions. We think the approach has promise and continue to urge its use.

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